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RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE  
RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY 1455

UNCLAS HO CHI MINH CITY 000987

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: PROTESTANTS BUILD A SEMINARY IN THE SOUTH

(SBU) On August 30, the Southern Evangelical Church of Vietnam (SECV) broke ground for a new bible college in HCMC's District Two. As previewed to Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom Hanford during a visit earlier in the month (septel), city officials approved SECV plans to build training and housing facilities for 200 seminarians. Vice-Chairman Nguyen The Doan of the national Committee for Religious Affairs flew from Hanoi to participate in the ceremony along with HCMC and local officials. In his remarks, the Vice-Chairman emphasized the commitment of the GVN to promote religious freedom and the importance of the SECV as a contributing member of Vietnamese society. SECV officials said that Protestant organizations from South Korea and the U.S. will help fund the construction of the five-acre campus.

Winnick